

Case No. 38491

State of New Jersey v. Jonathan Smith
Indictment for Seditious Words (on January 15, 1777, at the Eastern Precinct, Jonathan
Smith is accused of uttering seditious words)
Somerset : 1779

New Jersey State Archives
Supreme Court of New Jersey
Case Files, 1704 - 1844 (SSV00001)

10/20/2025

Supreme Court Case Files : Case # 38491
State of New Jersey v. Jonathan Smith

<u>Case Number</u>	<u>Case Type</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Dates</u>
38491	Indictment for Seditious Words (on January 15, 1777, at the Eastern Precinct, Jonathan Smith is accused of uttering seditious words)	Somerset	1779

On January 15, 1777, at the Eastern Precinct, Jonathan Smith, in discourse with persons unknown, and in the presence and hearing of Charles Suydam, and certain other persons, being British Officers, was heard to say: "I have been viewing the Rebel Guards along Millstone River, consisting of about two hundred men, and you may easily take them with four hundred Men; for they are Rebels, and Cowards, and will not fight. I am afraid to lodge in my own House on Account of the Rebels."

See also: [SSV00002-Supreme Court Minutes, Book 60, April Term 1779](#), page 270

PLAINTIFF	State of New Jersey
DEFENDANT	Smith, Jonathan (Yeoman) (of the Eastern Precinct)
NAMED IN CASE	Suydam, Charles
OFFICIAL	Paterson, William (Attorney General)
OFFICIAL	Stockton, Richard (Attorney) (for Jonathan Smith)
JURY FOREMAN	Sebring, Roelof

38491

State v Smith

Somerset

Seditious Words

New Jersey, Sup Court.
April 1779.

The State } Ind Jan
vs } Dictions
John Smith } Words.

A true Bill
Proot & Spring
Foreman

The Def. pleaded Not
Guilty, &
Richd. Stockton
for Def.

The Jurors, in Behalf of the State of New Jersey, for the
Body of the County of Somerset, upon their Oath depose, That
Jonathan Smith, late of the Eastern Precinct, in the same County
of Somerset, Thomas, being a pernicious and disaffected Man, & a
Person of a turbulent Mind & seditious Disposition & Conversation,
and contriving, practising, and falsely, maliciously, advising,
and seditiously intending to terrify and disunite the good Subjects
of this State, to dispose them to favour the Pretensions of the
Enemy, and to alienate the Affections of the People from the
present Government, on the fifteenth Day of January, in the Year
of our Lord, one thousand, seven hundred, and seventy seven, at
the Eastern Precinct aforesaid, in the same County of Somerset, having
assembled them and there with certain Persons (to the Jurors aforesaid
unknown) concerning the Militia of this State, & the
Troops of the United States, in the Presence & Hearing of ^{several} Officers,
Charles Snyder, ~~these~~ ^{being} ~~data~~ ^{Officers} and of certain other Persons,
(to the Jurors aforesaid not unknown) did falsely, maliciously,
advisedly, unlawfully, and seditiously say, assert, affirm, pronounce,
with a loud Voice (and use these false, malicious, seditious,
and opprobrious English Words, that is to say, "I meaning
the said Jonathan Smith) have been viewing the Rebel
Guards (meaning the American Guards) along Millstone
Creek, consisting of about two hundred Men, and you
see the said Jonathan meaning & addressing himself to
the British Officers aforesaid) may easily take them (meaning
the American Guards aforesaid) with four hundred Men;
for they (again meaning the aforesaid American Guards) are
rebels, and Cowards, and will not fight. I again meaning
the said Jonathan Smith) am afraid to lodge in my
own House on Account of the Rebels: (meaning
the aforesaid People & Subjects of this State,) to the

with Example of all others in the like Case offending, against
the Form of the Act of the Council & General Assembly of this
State in such Case made and provided, against the Peace
of this State, the Government, and Dignity of the same.

Jno. Catford,

Att. Genl.

New Jersey, Cape May.

April 1779.

The State

Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan

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Ind. Jan

Ind. Jan